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ABSTRACT

The Capital Children's Museum, the Options School, and the Model Early Learning Center are the three major components of the National Learning Center. The museum exposes children to a variety of subjects and concepts, including fine arts, science, foreign and local cultures, and social history. Its exhibits are designed to promote active engagement with local and international communities, and active exploration of human capacities for communication and creation. In addition to the exhibits, the museum includes a computer lab which offers a variety of classes for children and adults, a media arts program that offers animation classes for beginning to advanced students, and a variety of additional programs designed to engage children and families in the educational process. The Options School is an intensive one-year dropout-prevention program serving 100 economically disadvantaged sixth and seventh graders who have been identified as being most at-risk of dropping out of school. The Model Early Learning Center is an adaptation of the preschool programs of Reggio Emilia. During 1994 the National Learning Center hosted a wide variety of exhibits, performances, and events as well as a symposium on Multiple Intelligences Theory in practice and on the philosophy and practices of the preschools of Reggio Emilia, Italy. (AA)

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The National Learning Center

1994 Annual Report

It is a pleasure to introduce the 1994 Annual Report of The National Learning Center. 1994 turned out to be a milestone year in TNLC's history. In June, Founder and President Ann Lewin announced her resignation, effective the end of the year. Every aspect of TNLC is a reflection of Ann's vision, her creativity and her dynamic leadership. While it will be hard to imagine this place without her, the truest tribute we can pay to her is to emulate those qualities as we prepare to take TNLC into the twenty-first century.

I have inherited a remarkable and committed staff; the considerable achievements of 1994 are testimony to their capacity to dream together and then move confidently in the direction of their dreams. I consider myself fortunate to have them as colleagues.

Michael L. Greenebaum
President and Executive Director

Capital Children's Museum

Capital Children's Museum is a center for learning. Its exhibits are designed to promote active engagement with local and international communities, active exploration of human capacities for communication and creation, and the formation of predispositions to ask interesting and important questions about the world and about the self. The Museum engages children and adults by stimulating their curiosity so that learning is a self-motivated act.

The Museum is committed to exposing children to a variety of subjects and concepts, including fine arts, science, foreign and local cultures and social history.

Audience

Visitors

In 1994 Capital Children's Museum was host to over 175,000 visitors. The Museum is located in Northeast Washington, DC within easy walking distance of the U.S. Capitol and The Mall. As a museum in a popular tourist destination, our visitor demographics fluctuate with the tourist season. In 1994, during the off-season (September - April), approximately 35% of our visitors came from the District of Columbia, 45% came from the nearby suburbs of Maryland and the remaining 20% from the Virginia suburbs. During the tourist season, approximately 40% of our visitors came from out of town. Group tours accounted for twenty-five percent of our annual visitorship in a monthly pattern that ranges from one-tenth (January) to one-half (May) of our total visitors.

We have tailored group tours for blind, hearing-impaired, physically challenged and emotionally and mentally disturbed children and adults and often give free or reduced-rate visits to groups of children from disadvantaged schools, homeless and battered women's shelters, and other groups which show need. Special audience-specific programming, such as February Black History Month and September Hispanic Heritage month activities, reach additional audiences and also respond to the needs of our current regular audience.

Volunteers and Interns

In addition to our visitor audience of children and their parents, guardians and teachers, CCM reaches a diverse audience through volunteer, outreach and joint programs with other community organizations. Through our volunteer and intern program CCM involves a whole range of people, from home-schooled children who volunteer during the week, to senior citizens who come in for storytelling for toddlers, to patients at the National Rehabilitation Hospital in search of job training, to teenage participants in the Summer Youth Employment program, and high school and college interns who often do special projects for credit. The 1994 Volunteer Report is attached.

Exhibits

In May and June, "Mexico," the Museum's oldest exhibit, was completely refurbished with the help of the Mexican Cultural Institute and the Ambassador of Mexico and his wife. The exhibit was closed to the public for three weeks while new activities were created, murals were added, the entire exhibit was repainted, dozens of new objects from Mexico were placed and an entire room was completely redone. The former "Mexican Village" is now the Yucatan Peninsula, with a sand beach and a Mayan pyramid which children can climb up and in for a view of Mayan artifacts. The exhibit was reopened to the public with a reception on June 19.

The "Metamorphamaze," part of the third floor Changing Environments area, was also repaired and refurbished in 1994. This exhibit is a maze built for children to crawl through. It has mirrors, sloped floors, tunnels and unexpected corners, all designed to give children their own spaces to explore. The exhibit received a thorough overhaul and is ready for more years of wear and tear.

"Chuck Jones: An Animated Life," which opened at the end of 1993, was a major new draw for CCM. The exhibit occupied space on all three floors of the Museum and included original sketches and animation cels, as well as hands-on programming teaching the art of drawing, the history of motion pictures and modern animation techniques.

In 1994 we expanded and refined the educational programming for "Chuck Jones." The second floor gallery, "Observe and Draw" became one tour designed for older children (ages 10-12) in which they learn drawing and sketching techniques. The third floor galleries

which deal with animation itself are another tour which introduces children to the history and current technology and art of animation. In conjunction with this exhibit, animation classes are available. CCM has a variety of professional animation and production equipment which is used in these classes.

Special Exhibits

In addition to permanent exhibit galleries, Capital Children's Museum has three non-contiguous special exhibition galleries ranging from 600 to 900 square feet and a 120 by 6 foot entrance hall gallery. These galleries are used for borrowed exhibits that are scheduled for periods of four to six weeks with at least two each year scheduled for periods of two to four months or more each. These exhibits give the frequent visitor an ever-changing first look at the Museum, as well as serving as a lure for many adults who might otherwise not visit the Museum. Our 1994 Special Exhibits calendar follows.

December 1993/January 1994
Art from the sixteenth annual **WETA Children's Art Festival** open to all metropolitan area children. This year's theme was "What Makes Me Happy" and included the thirteen works featured in WETA's 1994 calendar that is distributed free to local non-profit organizations. It also included the thirty-three works selected for viewing in WETA broadcast announcements throughout the coming year.

February/March 1994
Art exhibit entitled **"Myself, My Island, My Home"** by children of the Pacific American Flag Territories of Guam, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands sponsored by the Consortium for Pacific Arts and Cultures.

March/April 1994
An **interactive exhibit on nutrition**, sponsored by Dole, Snow Valley, Safeway, Ore Ida, Tropicana and WGAY, included free samples of bananas, fruit juice and bottled water. Interactive computer programs introduced children to the new nutrition pyramid and encouraged them to eat a balanced diet.

April - June 1994
"I Love Life and I Want to Live" poster contest winners sponsored by the United Black Fund for DC Public School students in Grades K through 12. The contest is part of UBF's new "I Love Life and I Want to Live" campaign which the late UBF President Calvin W. Rolark described as a program to send youth "a positive message, make them fall in love with life and look forward to living a full life". This is the beginning of a major new UBF initiative to reduce youth violence.

June - October 1994
"Rain Forest Visions," an exhibit of art from students age 8 to 23 of the Usko-Ayar

Amazonian School of Painting in Pucallpa, Peru. This tuition-free school, run by Peruvian artist **Pablo Amaringo**, trains students as young as 8 to create professional quality paintings representing their native flora, fauna and culture. Some of the works have already been used to illustrate botanical texts. The art depicts the endangered Amazonian rain forest and the Amazonian way of life and culture. The exhibit is organized and sponsored by Landau Travelling Exhibits of Los Angeles in association with the Museum of Man of San Diego.

A VIP opening reception for the exhibit was done in conjunction with Sebastian International's (a major national ecologically correct haircare product manufacturer) annual "Little Green" environmental art contest judging at the Museum on June 22nd. Judges of the contest included members of GLOBE, USA (all of whom are Members of Congress).

June - September 1994
In conjunction with the Museum's exhibition of "Rain Forest Visions," the Museum organized the "Capital Rainforest Summer." This city-wide program emphasizing the world's remaining rainforests, both tropical and temperate, was a collaborative effort by five major educational institutions in Washington to present exhibits, special tours, and other educational programs to increase awareness of these beautiful and invaluable bio-assets. The five institutions were: Capital Children's Museum, The National Aquarium in Washington, The National Museum of Natural History, the National Zoo's Amazonia exhibit and the United States Botanic Garden.

June/July, 1994
1994 Reading Is Fundamental National Poster Contest Winners exhibit featured the fifty winners of RIF's 1994 national poster contest on the theme of the "joy of reading." Besides the grand prize winner, the exhibit included the first place, second place, and honorable mention prize winners in all age categories. Many of the artists featured in the exhibit and their families visited the Museum during their summer break to see their works displayed.

August/September, 1994
The **Little Green Environmental Poster Contest Winners** exhibit featured the finalists in the United States portion of the Little Green international environmental poster art contest. The actual judging for the winning poster took place at the Museum at a reception on June 20th. Little Green is an environmental education program of Sebastian International.

September/October, 1994
Peace, Friendship and Goodwill Children's Art featured works from the international children's art collection of the Christian Children's Fund on the theme of "Peace, Friendship and Goodwill". In conjunction with the "Wish House" exhibit below and a Peace Fair held at the Museum on October 22nd and 23rd, this exhibit was part of a continuing effort on the part of the Museum to promote anti-violence and conflict resolution strategies.

October/November, 1994
The Wish House gives children an opportunity to create their own "Wish Breaks" for the future which are attached to the walls of the "Wish House" along with a Polaroid photo of the artist. The theme of this exhibition, **Writings on the Wall Wish House**, was "My Wish for a Peaceful Future." The "Wish House" is sponsored by the "Writings on the Wall" project of Washington, D.C. and San Francisco, California.

October/November, 1994
Every year Shady Grove Hospital in Gaithersburg, Maryland sponsors a poster contest for Montgomery County elementary school children on the theme of a "Healthy Choice". This year's theme was "I Make the Healthy Choice Not to Smoke" and the exhibit, **Shady Grove Hospital Healthy Choices Poster Contest Winners**, featured the twenty seven winning entries.

December, 1994 - January, 1995
The **WETA Art Festival** features 40 works selected from the approximately 150 pieces created at the annual WETA Art Festival that will be featured in the 1995 WETA Calendar and in on-air promotions throughout the year during children's programming. Seven thousand WETA Calendars are distributed free each year to local non-profit organizations. The theme for this year's art festival was "Dreams."

Performances and Events

Capital Children's Museum offers visitors an array of special performances and programs, some of which are associated with Special Exhibits, celebrations or monthly themes. In 1994 we greatly expanded our events offerings, with a performance or special activity scheduled almost every weekend throughout the year. This programming keeps regular visitors coming back and, through press releases and public service announcements, keeps the Museum in the media. The following listing includes selected events from the year.

February 1994
Daily throughout February, in celebration of Black History Month, the Museum featured a series of films by Willie Moore, a local animator and animation instructor in CCM's National Center for Animation. He is known for his ability to express powerful social messages through his films. In 1993 he received the Rosebud Award for his film "Ghana Folktale Jam".

February 21, 1994
On President's Day the Lion Tales Puppet Company gave a performance in the auditorium entitled "The Freedom Parade" featuring life-size puppets as characters in the story. It was especially appealing to children in preschool through second grade.

February 26, 1994
In celebration of Black History Month the Museum presented "Under the African Sun" by the Richmond Theater Company for Children. Written by the African-American story teller Katherine White, the performance gave the children a glimpse of the rich traditions and timely morals embodied in African folktales.

March 5, 1994
CCM's **Odyssey of the Mind** team presented their performance to an enthusiastic audience of Museum visitors, judges and staff. We are the first museum to participate in the program and are serving as a pilot site to test the expansion to community-based organizations of this widely acclaimed program.

March 15, 1994
The Museum's **15th Birthday Party** attracted over 1,000 people for a full day of activities. They included a "petting zoo" of musical instruments, a mock emergency room (with professionals from the Hospital for Sick Children), printing of birthday cards, and decoration and consumption of 800 cupcakes by children and parents. Trustee Barbara Gordon cut the magnificent cakes which were donated by Safeway and Tiffany's Bakery. A light lunch was provided for all by the National Council for Alcohol & Drug Information.

April 4, 1994
Over 200 children searched all of CCM during the **Great Egg Hunt**, finding beautiful wooden eggs that had been carefully hidden throughout the Museum. The hand-crafted eggs, imported from Poland, were donated by new Museum Member Renata Jones.

April 9, 16 and 30, 1994
Environmental workshops introduced children to conservation of wildlife and natural resources. Topics included "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle," "Endangered Species and Habitats," and a puppet show on energy conservation by the Blue Sky Puppet Theater. The workshops were developed and presented by CCM staff and the staff from Earth Force.

April 16, 1994
The Calloway Tea Party was a big hit with Museum visitors. Celestial Seasonings provided tea for everyone, and there were cookies to decorate and eat while author **David Kirk** read his delightful new children's book Miss Spider's Tea Party.

April 16, 1994
The **Kennedy Center Travelling Young Players** put on a fabulous performance, "Footsteps in the Sky," a musical interpretation of folk and mythical stories which captivated visitors of all ages.

April 23, 1994
Earth Day celebrations at CCM included a performance by Blue Sky Puppets. "Lights Out on the Bunny Brothers" was a humorous approach to energy conservation education.

Four environmental workshops in April had a full enrollment of 120 and covered topics ranging from endangered species to water pollution. They were a joint effort of Earth Force and the CCM staff. The Weyre's Cave Wildlife program was a major highlight in May. The program about birds of prey featured live falcons and owls. Children were able to learn more about these amazing birds and their role in the environment.

April 30, 1994
Museum visitors were amazed by the fantastic **Double Dutch** demonstrations and had the opportunity to learn how to do it themselves. The demonstrations were put on by the Boys and Girls Clubs of Washington.

June/July 1994
To celebrate the reopening of the Mexico exhibit and to honor Mexico's participation in World Cup Soccer, the Museum hosted a one month **Fiesta Mexicana**. The Fiesta included a variety of activities celebrating the Mexican Culture. The Cultural Institute and the Embassy worked with Museum staff to organize performances by native Mexicans.

June/July 1994
Capital Children's Museum was selected as one of only two official **World Cup Arts '94** sites. As a result, the Museum was promoted in the Arts '94 literature distributed to the thousands of World Cup Soccer fans who came to Washington to see the games.

July 23, 1994
In conjunction with the Rain Forest Visions exhibit, **Ugh-A-Bug** introduced children to insects native to the Amazonian Rain Forest. Children were also invited to create their own "insects" out of edible materials.

September 16 - October 16, 1994
Hispanic Heritage Month honored the arts and crafts of Spain, Mexico and Latin American through activities and performances all month long. "Rain Forest Visions" was extended through October as part of this festival.

September 29, 1994
The Richmond Theater Company performed **"The Ugly Duckling"** for Museum visitors. The Hans Christian Anderson tale encourages children to see beyond outward appearances.

October 1, 1994
Children's Hispanic Heritage Festival and **Hispanic Chalk Art Festival** helped to celebrate Arts and Humanities Month (October) and Hispanic Heritage Month. In addition to the participatory chalk art festival under the guidance of local Hispanic artists, the Hispanic Heritage Festival featured performances by Corale Cantigas, a Latin American community choir, demonstrations of traditional Latin American dances, and the telling of traditional Latin American folktales. The festival was presented in collaboration with the Institute for Puerto Rican Affairs.

October, 1994 - June, 1995
Boston artist and professor Mark Cooper brought his anti-violence campaign to Capital Children's Museum where he has been working with inner city students on creating large placards, dioramas, and billboards on the theme of anti-violence. Beginning on December 1, 1994, these placards appeared on Metrobuses, in Metro subway stations, and on billboards throughout the Washington, DC metropolitan area. The project is funded in part by a grant from the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation.

October 22 and 23, 1994
The **Little Friends for Peace** presented a **Peace Fair** at CCM with singing, dancing and storytelling all designed to enhance children's peacemaking skills.

October 29 and 30, 1994
The annual CCM **Halloween Monster Bash** allowed children and parents to celebrate the holiday safely together. Activities included face painting and costume making and a scavenger hunt. Safeway provided pumpkins for all children.

November 7, 1994
The Museum's annual **Loy Krathong Festival** introduced visitors to the Thai tradition of floating banana leaf boats filled with candles, incense, coins and flowers out into the water for good luck in the coming year. Activities included a krathong making contest, folktale telling, and sing-alongs. Krathong-making is an every-day part of our exhibit "From the Hands of Thailand."

November 12, 1994
Juggler **Jonathan Austin** presented two shows at CCM. Austin has performed at fairs, on television, and at Disney World. All visitors enjoyed his elaborate style and incredible talent.

December 17 and 18, 1994
The **Mexican Posada** festival is a traditional Mexican Christmas festival. Our version had a piñata and authentic refreshments in "Mexico."

Education Programs

Future Center

In 1994 CCM continued its commitment to technology access through Future Center, a public access computer lab which offers a variety of classes for children and adults. Future Center is located on the third floor of CCM. Future Center is involved in the community-based computer network "Playing to Win," which allows participants free access to a number of information and communication systems, including the Internet.

Future Center responds directly to the needs of Capital Children's Museum's immediate community. Future Center's basic computer skills classes, including introductions to DOS, the Macintosh and word processing, help adults train to enter or reenter the workplace.

Afterschool programs in Future Center keep children out of usually empty homes, off the street and in a learning environment that they enjoy. Participants in these programs are free to use any and all of the educational software available. A tutor is available to guide participants in long-term projects which may or may not be related to school work. Future Center has also become an important resource for home-schooled children and their families, many of whom would not otherwise have access to the computers, educational software, and Internet capabilities offered in Future Center.

Media Arts

CCM's Media Arts program and the National Center for Animation became important educational facets of CCM in 1994. Through programming associated with "Chuck Jones: An Animated Life," the Media Arts and animation program became more visible at CCM. The program offers animation classes for beginning to advanced students. While ostensibly geared to children, the program is designed to accommodate any age -- adults are more than welcome additions to the classes.

Other Programming

We offer a variety of additional programming designed to engage children and families in the educational process. Programs are designed with careful attention to audience and to our facilities and staff. One of the new offerings in 1994 was Tot Time, a weekly program which brings Senior Volunteers in for storytelling to toddlers.

Scientific Sundays is a new program for 1994 which offers hourly classes from 11am to 2pm on a variety of science topics. The series has, since its inception in August, 1994, explored rockets and gravity, gardens and plants, pollution clean-up by humans and by nature, electricity and magnetism, snow flakes, and the principles of

sound and many other topics. These sessions capture children's imaginations while showing them "real-life" applications of some basic scientific principles. Response to this program has been overwhelming and we have plans to expand the program over the next year.

Options School

Options School, founded in 1989, is run by TNLC under contract with the D.C. Public Schools. It is an intensive one-year dropout-prevention program serving 100 economically disadvantaged sixth and seventh graders who have been identified by their home schools as being most at-risk of dropping out of school. Each student is at least two years below grade level in reading and math. Most students have a record of attendance and behavior problems. Options School operates on the conviction that a one-year intervention at the critical moment when children are young adolescents can instill sufficient motivation and self-esteem to prevent many of these young adults from dropping out of school before graduation.

Meanwhile, on the fourth floor here at TNLC our heroic staff continues to give both academic and personal support to their students. The group which entered in September 1994, have challenged the staff to rethink every aspect of the program. They appear to be at greater risk than other entering groups have been; they demonstrate significant psychological and emotional damage. The staff is determined to reach these students, but all agree that the first few months have been unusually difficult.

The program continues to be based solidly on the acquisition of those skills which lead to academic success, but serious attention is also devoted to those other "intelligences," to use Howard Gardner's important term, which are so often neglected or undervalued in many schools. In particular, artistic and communication skills are at the center of the curriculum; Options students can avail themselves of the resources of the Museum as they develop these interests and skills.

During 1994, the artistic accomplishments of Options students were visible throughout the city. Working with artist and Boston College Professor Mark Cooper, our students created a number of visually compelling posters urging the community to stop violence against children. Some of these posters were displayed on billboards, Metrobuses and Metro trains early in January 1995. Students also worked closely with the Museum's Animation Laboratory to create animated commercials or public service announcements on the theme "Where Are You Going?".

Options School Tracking Project

In 1993, a Report on Options School, funded by the Toyota USA Foundation, revealed that 85% of Option School's first two graduating classes were attending school

regularly. This year, a generous grant from the John Ben Snow Memorial Trust has allowed us to begin tracking the Options Class of 1990, since the 1994-95 school year is their senior year. Assistant Director Nadine Kerns is the principal investigator for this project, which should be completed shortly after this school year in June 1995.

Memphis Replication

Perhaps the most exciting news from Options comes not from the District, but from Memphis, Tennessee. The Memphis City Schools have asked our Options staff to replicate the Options School in Memphis. Director Sharon Hemphill and Ann Lewin worked out the details of the agreement in late 1994; the process of staff selection and training began early in 1995. Options School in Memphis is scheduled to open before the end of the current school year.

Mentor Program

An essential component of Options School is the Mentor Program. Members of the community, including staff at TNLC, volunteer to be a mentor for an Options School student. Mentors are companions, confidants and models for their Options friends. Throughout the year, students have the opportunity to visit their mentors at work and to share recreational activities with them. For example, this fall groups attended a football game at the University of Maryland and a Washington Bullets basketball game. Assistant Director Tom Mills is the director of the Mentor Program. He not only recruits and oversees the mentors, he also provides training for them, since relationships are not always easy or natural.

Model Early Learning Center

The Model Early Learning Center (MELC) is also a joint project with the D.C. Public Schools. Since 1992, it has been an adaptation of the preschools of Reggio Emilia, whose philosophy and pedagogy have attracted world-wide attention for many years. Pedagogista Amelia Gambetti was a treasured colleague and mentor during much of 1994; she combines her years of experience in Reggio Emilia and her magnificent understanding of young children with the charisma of a natural teacher. In addition to the support and insight she provided the MELC staff, she began a year-long teacher education project for the DC Public Schools, which will culminate in spring, 1995.

We were delighted in September to receive the first certificate of accreditation ever awarded by Reggio Children, "as the school that has begun with success the realization of the organizational and philosophical principles of the Reggio Approach." The exquisite care and attention given to each of the thirty-six children, ages 3-6, in the program is reflected in the beauty and depth of the documentation in words, pictures and artifacts which line the walls of the fifth floor home of MELC. Not only is this a

visual record which allows parents and visitors to understand the program and its principles, it is an *aide memoire* for the children, who always have a readily available context within which to understand their activities.

This rich resource always deeply impresses the delegations of teachers who attend our day-long workshop on the history and program of MELC. Six such "MELC Days" were held in 1994, bringing teachers from all over the country to TNLC. These workshops were conducted by Ann Lewin, Amelia Gambetti, and our outstanding MELC staff, Jennifer Azzariti, Wendy Baldwin, Sonya Shoptaugh, Genet Astatke and Deborah Barley. And, of course, Coco the Cat made occasional appearances.

It would be impossible to capture the richness of the MELC program in a brief document. Instead, let me quote sections from the "Report on the MELC," dated 28 October 94.

> *Children continue to bring into the school signs of fall. We used the light boxes to support our explorations of leaves. . .In the studio, two children worked collaboratively on a fall diorama. . .On Friday, we celebrated the season together with families at the National Arboretum. We took walks in the leaves, looked for our turtle in the pond, made some sketches of trees, ran through the tall grasses and had a picnic lunch. Two panels representing our experiences with the fall project are completed, although the exploration of fall is still going on throughout the school.*

That turtle appears again in the next week's report and soon it is clear that there is an on-going turtle project in MELC. That is the way projects begin - a child's casual comment, a teacher's shrewd intervention and a need to find answers to interesting questions. The weekly "Report on the MELC," is a treasure trove of sensitive observation, thoughtful planning, and reflective analysis - a model of the way teachers, children, parents and the wide world ought to interact.

1994 Annual Symposium: Howard Gardner and the Preschools of Reggio Emilia

The National Learning Center hosted a symposium on Multiple Intelligences Theory in practice and on the philosophy and practices of the preschools of Reggio Emilia, Italy from June 16-19, 1994. There were 600 people in attendance, most of whom were teachers and school administrators. The audience represented forty states, including Washington, D.C., and five foreign countries, including Japan. The Symposium focused on the work of Dr. Howard Gardner, creator of Multiple Intelligences Theory, and the late Professor Loris Malaguzzi, founder of the preschools of Reggio Emilia.

The Symposium presented Multiple Intelligences Theory and addressed how teachers across the US are implementing it, with an emphasis on public school early education programs (pre-K, K, and grades 1-4). A second series of lectures and discussions focused on the philosophy and practices of the preschools of Reggio Emilia, a group of 32 municipal preschools, the first of which was founded shortly after World War II. Educators from the United States who have implemented practices based on MI theory and leaders from the Reggio preschools presented their theories and practices.

Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI), set forth in his book Frames of Mind (1983), has changed the way many educators think about learning. Gardner posits seven distinct intelligences, each of which must be catered to if an educational environment is to be effective. The seven intelligences are linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal. In the ten years since MI Theory was first proposed, educators have shown more and more interest in using it in the classroom to educate and explore the capabilities of the whole child.

An important part of MI Theory is that we each have an intelligence print that is as unique as our thumbprint. The implication is that early education environments must cater to all the intelligences or we will stymie, perhaps for life, the growth of an individual's potential. The practical implication is that classrooms must be rich in a wide variety of stimuli to engage children in all seven domains.

The municipality of Reggio Emilia has become famous for its remarkable programs for infants from age three months through three years and for preschoolers age three to six years. Increasing numbers of educators from the U.S. and from around the world have visited these schools over the past decade. What we see in these schools represents a mature, highly synthesized, beautifully articulated approach to early childhood education.

Reggio practices entail a robust program of parent involvement, continual work developing and perfecting the environment, introduction of classroom projects based on careful attention to the children's interests by teachers who act as researchers, documentation of the children's interests as evidenced in their conversations and activities, and collaborative relationships among and between the teachers, children and parents. Gardner refers to the practices of the Reggio Emilia preschools as the most "seamless" integration of theory and practice in the world.

The National Learning Center would like to thank its major donors in 1994 who, along with hundreds of Museum members and other individuals, helped to make all of its programs and projects possible.

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An audited financial statement for the 1994 fiscal year (1 July 93 - 30 June 94) is available upon request.

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* Michael L. Greenebaum will assume this position on 1 July 1995.

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It's between 12:30 and 1 p.m., the period designated as reading time, but after playing basketball, eating lunch and laughing, it's difficult for some to settle down.

A boy takes a swing at a girl, she swings back and the brief encounter ends as a teacher appears in the hallway. Boys are 70 percent of the Options enrollment.

Geneva, clomping down the hall in her platform shoes, stops for a second to read Maya Angelou's *Still I Rise* on a bulletin board. There is little reaction.

Melissa Rentschler, theater teacher, gives half her class a lesson in Shakespeare in one room while her assistant explains to the other half in another room how to update the language in *Rebel Without a Cause*.

Before the Shakespeare reading begins, Rentschler puts her students into the mood by getting them in front of the mirrors and doing body sculptures.

Later, one student sits upside down on a mat, his feet on the wall, while others hear Rentschler talk about abandoning their own personalities for those of the characters they're about to portray.

"It is a sanctuary for many of the children. They're used to hearing sirens of ambulances and police cars, but they hear happy noises here."

—Sharon Hemphill

Henry Miller feels the vibrations of drama teacher Melissa Rentschler's throat. Rentschler was demonstrating how to whisper, so the audience can hear.

School's over. Students are given two bus tokens, one to go home on and the other to return to school the next day. Former options student Tiara Pollard, 17, shows up in her dance outfit, ready to teach a dance class.

It's a volunteer duty, one she calls her means of giving back to the school that a couple years ago led her to seek her GED. When she went to Options, a dance teacher gave Pollard something to make her feel good about herself, she said.

"I'm trying to bring back what I got from this place," Pollard said.

Later, Pollard cut her class short when her students were too disruptive. It was a method of dealing with people she learned while at Options.

Hemphill retreats to her cubicle of an office. She has felt the energy. Before she absorbs it, she picks up her coat, locks her door and goes home.

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OPTIONS

School enthusiastically taps into a raw, unruly energy

By Beverly Cotten
The Commercial Appeal

[redacted] they come is the philosophy of trying to reach the children, to help stabilize them," said Options director Sharon Hemphill.

That stabilization can mean comforting a student whose family member was murdered the night before, as happened one day recently. It can mean making a second-grade level storybook meaningful to a bunch of 13-year-olds.

And it can mean turning the anger spewing out of Geneva McDaniel's face into a slight, albeit sarcastic, smile.

Noisily entering the hallways shortly after 8 a.m., waiting in line to be searched and checked off for attendance are children like Geneva, who later in the day will argue that it's perfectly legitimate to want to cut class.

It will be a frenetic, yet typical, day at Options, one likely to send first-year teachers home needing serious decompression time. It will be a day of minor triumphs, like Geneva's smile, and major concerns, like whether tomorrow's field trip to the University of Maryland will go smoothly.

"Feel the energy," urges Hemphill, 43, as she observes the hordes of students entering the building, "but don't absorb it. It can be a bit overwhelming if you absorb it."

No one can argue that electrical charges of energy do not pass through the airwaves of Options. Some will shock, others will stimulate.

"Y'all come to school to get an education or to fight?" counselor Maurice Ferguson asks a pair of students he caught sparring in the hallway.

"Well, sometimes she be jumping me," one says.

"Tell her to leave y'all alone," Ferguson responds. "I want you to take care of yourself. All of this starts with self. You can't take care of other people."

Down the hall, geography teacher Sheila Madison is beginning a day of planning. While teachers in most traditional schools get planning [redacted] periods, those at Options get one day a week to plan class activities. The class is shown at work on a map of the Washington subway system.

[redacted]

Art teacher Colleen Kaiser is doubling as a traffic cop in the hallway outside her classroom. She's trying to reason with Geneva, answer the question of another student and get information from a staff member. Geneva's been disrupting the class, and Kaiser is talking to her about respect.

"You are a teacher," Geneva angrily responds. "You are not my mother." Then she turns to education assistant Howard Tinker, who is running interference. "How am I supposed to work when she keeps [redacted] at me. I'm just [redacted] don't [redacted] nothing wrong with that. How's that being rude?"

Kaiser returns to the classroom, where the other five members of the class are working on a series of drawings later to be animated into cartoons. The theme of the cartoons is [redacted]

"What are some good ways to get money?" Kaiser asks and gets an answer about getting a job. "And a bad way?" Someone mentions bootlegging videos.

Across the room, a boy at a light table sings a rap song while pounding the beat with a pencil. Nearby, another gets out a box of dominoes. Kaiser makes note of it.

"Put the dominoes away, this isn't Romper Room," she admonishes the student.

Later, Kaiser, a first-year teacher, talks about how she integrates such subjects as math, economics and English into an art class.

For example, she says, each week the students must learn a 10-word vocabulary list on the topic at hand. When the topic is jobs, they hear about writing a resume. Dieting on the track is not only acceptable in classes like Kaiser's, it's encouraged.

But teaching in a school like Options can have some surprising, and depressing, moments. [redacted] says [redacted] go [redacted] different textures in their homes. One girl told me she didn't have a home, that she lived in a shelter."

Because the Options school is in the same building with Washington's children's museum, the school uses the museum's animation laboratory to teach about the possibilities of cartooning as a career.

Children who attend Options often show an interest in the arts, said Options director Hemphill, so the school uses creativity as an avenue toward [redacted] in [redacted]

"The [redacted] sanctuary for many of the children," Hemphill said. "They're used to hearing sirens of ambulances and police cars, but they hear happy noises here. I love hearing their laughter, and when I can hear about children coming here and actually being children, that excites me.

"Our children have stopped dreaming; they're living a nightmare. We're here to help them dream again, to expose them to things that they could do."

While other students eat lunch or shoot hoops, Glen Swanson coaches this group of 15 or so on the fine art of bargaining. Having students swap the roles of buyer and seller, Swanson gives them pocket calculators to illustrate how they'd do business.

Swanson, a math teacher during regular school hours, incorporates math principles, economics and a little psychology into this half-hour special session. He uses phrases such as "cost of goods sold" and "haystoning" to teach about business.

The class is a Young Entrepreneurs session, funded by a grant from the Koch Foundation in New York. Swanson bounds up and down, genuinely thrilled when a student gives a [redacted] and [redacted]

[redacted] about [redacted] they [redacted] day to [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] Swanson. "I really think this will be a turning point for her."

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HOW HAS THE MODEL EARLY LEARNING CENTER EVOLVED IN ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH REGGIO EMILIA?

Amelia shared her previous experiences from Reggio Emilia with us day after day. It was important for her to revisit her teaching and through this action, she was able to support us in our new adventure. Eventually, after much time, thought and energy, we began to see the connections between philosophy and practice. We believed in the most important elements of the Reggio Emilia approach. For example, recognizing children's full potential, working in collaborative groups, the importance of time and the physical space, the role of the teacher as researcher, the use of the studio and the role of the studio teacher (atelierista), the expression of children through more than a hundred languages, documentation, revisiting, and parent involvement. It is important to know that we did not face these issues one by one, but we faced them at the same time, one element supported by the other ones.

As a result of working on adapting the ideas of Reggio Emilia, we began to have richer interactions with children and families, we interacted differently with each other in our team, our focus changed and enthusiasm increased because we saw and felt the changes. We found new values in what we were doing or old values became new in this time of reassessment and growth. We were beginning to feel that we could offer something different to the human beings who were a part of our lives. It has been a gradual process of understanding because we started from a place of confusion, though there has never been a time when we said, "Now we understand." It is always a process, one which is never completed, of having our understanding become deeper. Only through our attempts and our mistakes are we able to learn more about the complexity of the Reggio approach and our relationship with it.

CONSIDERING THAT YOU ARE A TEAM OF DIFFERENT CULTURES AND DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES, WHAT WERE THE DIFFICULTIES THAT YOU ENCOUNTERED IN COOPERATING?

For us to become a truly strong and united team, we needed to be able to listen and hear each other. One of the qualities we had to develop was our availability to show our vulnerabilities. We needed to be able to talk honestly about who we were, are and what we were doing. We needed to discuss our confusions and our mistakes so we that could learn together through each other's experiences, as well as our own. To make that kind of connection required a lot of trust and a lot of courage to be able to show that we needed help as well as to offer help.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE ABOUT CONFLICTS IN A TEAM OF TEACHERS?

It is important to accept a possible conflict as a resource, not as a criticism or a negative aspect of cooperation. We suggest that it is better to understand a disagreement rather than refuse to acknowledge its existence or discuss it, and then *pretend* to collaborate. We have to be honest in expressing our own ideas and observations and willing to speak up.

It is a great practice for teachers to observe the same situation together, to share observations and realize each person's point of view as well as each person's unique style of observing. Basic trust and openness are crucial if teachers truly want to change. Conflicts can be seen as a way to grow, a way to see what we are doing. We need each other to see ourselves more clearly and through different perspectives.

Reggio Children, Italy awards its first "Certificate of Accreditation" to the Model Early Learning Center in Washington, D.C.

The Model Early Learning Center is a program of The National Learning Center (TNLC). It runs under contract and collaborates with the District of Columbia Public Schools. The program serves 36 three- to six-year-olds who are referred by D.C. Public Schools from six Chapter I schools. The MELC was selected in September 1993 by *Parent* magazine as one of the 10 best preschools in America. Of the schools selected for this honor, the MELC was the only preschool truly adapting the principles and philosophies of the preschools of Reggio Emilia.

reggio accreditation!

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innovations

in early education: the international reggio exchange

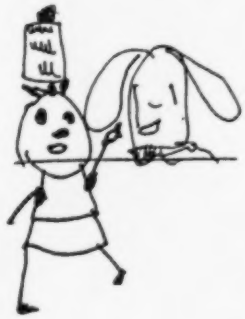
the model early learning center: an interview with teachers inspired by the reggio approach

by Libby Sheldon-Harsch with Lella Gandini

The Model Early Learning Center (MELC) in Washington, D.C., is a very special place. The 36 children, ages 3 to 6 years, who attend this program are having an experience that is unique to this country. This is a place where inner-city children and families from the United States meet the innovative ideas of Reggio Emilia, Italy. To capture the essence and importance of what is taking place at the MELC, Amelia Gambetti and her team will share their reflections, thoughts and feelings in this two-part interview.

WHAT WERE YOUR FIRST REACTIONS TO MEETING THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH?

In the beginning Ann sent a memo to the staff saying that we should pay close attention to the ideas of Reggio Emilia because of its importance to the field of education. At that time, Sonya wrote a memo back asking, "WHO is Reggio Emilia?" This is how unfamiliar we were with the approach. Ann then sent us Rebecca New and Lella Gandini's articles about the environment [editor's note: see Recommended Resources]. We were also lucky that the Hundred Languages of Children exhibit was in the museum, which allowed us instant access to the video, "A Portrait of a Lion," which is documentation of an actual project that happened in Reggio Emilia. When we saw actual pictures from Reggio Emilia we were overwhelmed by the richness, the environments, but most importantly, by the beauty and sophistication of the children's thinking.



After we became familiar enough with the philosophy of Reggio Emilia and more information became available to us, we decided to meet once or twice a week to discuss what we thought were exciting and inspiring ideas. Although the information was captivating, the approach felt distant to us. We weren't quite sure that this would ever work for us to consider using because we were in an environment that we assumed didn't like change. After much consideration, we found these ideas too important to ignore. At this point we began to understand that we needed more information and the only way to do that was to connect with the Italians who actually worked in Reggio. With Ann's drive and initiative, it became clear that there was only one person who could give us her experience, Amelia Gambetti. Ann played the critical role of connecting us with Amelia, at first at conferences and then for a long weekend, and finally she arranged a six-month consultation with Amelia which then turned into a long-term relationship with her!

HOW DID YOU, AMELIA, ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION IN THE TEAM AT THE MODEL EARLY LEARNING CENTER?

We wanted to be a team and use the differences among us as a resource for the group. We knew that the only way to make a connection with the Reggio Emilia approach was by working together. From the beginning, we tried to create an atmosphere of confidence. When I tried to communicate with the team, I wanted to let them know that I was also there in order to understand more and to know more. Only through this new knowledge would I have a chance to help the teachers grow. I knew that if I could add more elements to my knowledge, I could help them. I could include what I know about the context of the school, also about their personalities.

I asked to observe for one week to 10 days in the fall of 1993. Like a shadow, I followed everyone everywhere, as I took many notes. The staff did their part by accepting this immediately. Together we understood that I was not there for criticizing or evaluating, but for understanding. The director, Ann Lewin, gave me complete freedom to act in the school. It was a big message of trust. I was a little bit concerned about that amount of responsibility, but totally grateful to Ann because she showed her strong belief in what I could do. I was asking the teachers to give me the same confidence. We liked each other and we understood each other immediately. The staff gave me their total trust.

Capital Children's Museum

where learning is an adventure™

800 Third Street, N.E. ▪ Washington, D.C. 20002

Museum Hours:

Tuesday through Sunday (and holiday Mondays)
10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's, Easter and non-holiday Mondays

Museum Admission:

- Admission charge; children under 2 are free.
- Weekday group visits available by reservation. Call (202) 675-4149.

Museum Exhibits:

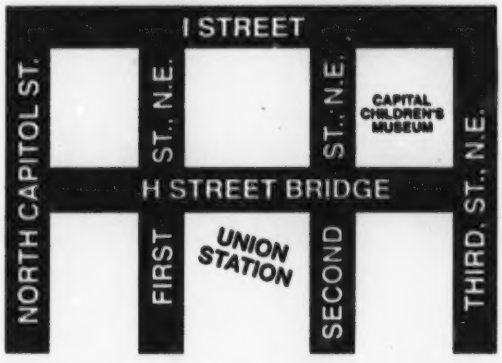
Animation: The World of Chuck Jones • International Hall: Mexico • Communication • Science Hall • From the Hands of Thailand • Changing Environments • Nek Chand Garden

Special Events:

For Museum hours or directions, call (202) 543-8600. For up-to-date information on CCM's special exhibits, activities and workshops, call CCM at (202) 675-4125.

Directions:

- By Metro, take the red line to Union Station. Go to the top floor and exit. Walk straight through the parking lot and turn right on H Street. Walk down H Street to 3rd Street. CCM is on the northeast corner of 3rd and H Streets, NE (about a five minute walk).
- Driving, from North Capitol St., turn east onto H St. Just after the bridge, turn left onto 3rd Street to the Museum or turn right onto 3rd Street to park in the PMI lot.



Capital Children's Museum (CCM), a pacesetter among "hands-on" museums, is dedicated to innovation in education. The exhibits combine arts, science, humanities, and technology to create a fun-filled learning experience for all.

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